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Mayor Coleman and Chief Prosecutor McIntosh Join Residents to Demolish Notorious Drug House 50 Police Runs and 11 Code Complaints to Abandoned Home since 1998

(COLUMBUS) More dangerous, abandoned homes are being demolished in 2004, as the City works to remove the blighted and often crime-ridden structures from Columbus neighborhoods. Today, South Side residents of the Hungarian Village neighborhood joined Mayor Michael B. Coleman and City Prosecutor Stephen McIntosh from the City Attorney's Office to tear down a vacant building that had become a magnet for crime at 1632 South 4th Street.

"I pledged that the City would be more aggressive in fighting blight in our neighborhoods. This house has been vacant and abandoned for more than a year and has been an obvious neighborhood nuisance. We will continue to work to strengthen City Codes that will help us do more to get rid of the eyesores and fight negligent property owners who fail to take care of the properties they own," said Mayor Coleman.

From 1998-2002, Police Officers responded to 50 calls at the South 4th Street address, including nine narcotics-related calls. There were another 29 raids executed by Division of Police narcotics officers between the beginning of 2002 and last week within blocks of this property. Since 1999, the city's Code Enforcement Office received 11 separate complaints on the property.

"The City Attorney's Office is committed to working with Code Enforcement, with patrol officers on the streets and with concerned citizens in our neighborhoods to identify and eliminate these problem properties. Last year, prosecutors handled more than 6000 environmental cases. And this year, a dedicated prosecutor is working with officers to identify troubled properties - where drugs and criminal activity have become commonplace - to label them as nuisance properties so we can shut them down," said McIntosh.

Another example of the City's increased activity to remove blight and reduce drug activity is through the Building Enforcement Teams (BET). Columbus Code Enforcement Officers work with the Division of Police by conducting code inspections during, or as a follow up to narcotics raids. In 2002, 56 properties were inspected, that increased to 134 properties in 2003 and will continue to increase in 2004.

While the City prefers to see families purchase and rehabilitate homes, sometimes damage are too severe and the house must be demolished. The City tore down 23 structures in 2002, 25 in 2003 and will destroy 25-30 in 2004 with a budget of \$200,000.